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THE UNITED STATES OF INDIA

BY J. Z. HODGE

THE United States of India is the world's newest and most unexpected experiment in democracy. Without observation, but not without significance, the miracle has been wrought, and this ancient people after centuries of internal division and political childhood rises to the dignity of national self-consciousness. The "white man's burden" reverts back to the shoulders of the "Aryan brown." Long the fragile ward of Great Britain, now to a large extent mistress in her own house, India will do her own thinking and determine her own destiny, a junior partner, for the time being, in the family of nations that comprise the British Empire. The emergence of India in the arena of world politics is an event we dare not ignore. There is challenge as well as appeal in the new call of the East. Speaking at Cambridge University a year ago, Lord Meston, a distinguished Anglo-Indian statesman, summed up the situation in the following illuminating sentence: "India stands at the crossways, with feudalism behind her and untried democracy in front of her." Events have moved since then: the Legislative Assembly, or Indian Parliament, came into being on January 1, and from the same date the Provincial Legislative Councils took their place with the democratic administrations of the world.

The ordinary citizen of the West does not readily associate democracy with India. To him this old land of mystery and romance stands for the "mild Hindoo," the least assertive and most subservient of political mortals; for princes, rulers and "sun dried bureaucrats," lording it with ease and dignity over uncomplaining millions; for religious fanaticisms, spiritual dictatorships and the constant clash of conflicting creeds; for a weird, inexplicable system called Caste—"a social ladder on which every man kisses the feet of the man above him, and kicks the face of the man below him"; for dumb, patient peasants allied to

a kindly soil, but exposed to drought and flood that too often spell famine; for sages, philosophers and ascetics who, far removed from the whirl of modern life, have lived on the uplands and witnessed to the supremacy of spirit; for sacred animals and sacred rivers, Juggernaut cars and fantastic processions; for picturesque Sikhs and sturdy Gurkhas who came to the help of Empire and surprised the Kaiser; for great soldiers like Henry Havelock and masterful administrators like Warren Hastings; for the Taj at Agra, by general consent the most beautiful building ever made by human hands, and the ruined Residency at Lucknow, where "ever upon the topmost roof the Banner of England blew"; for mutinies, intrigues, deceits, flatteries and fascinations; for idols, ghosts, superstitions, illiteracy, enslaved womanhood, contrasts and contradictions, subtle seditions and splendid loyalties, abounding wealth and grinding poverty; for snakes and mosquitoes, elephants and tigers, missionaries and officials, planters and tourists, the Ganges and the Himalayas, Tommy Atkins and "Kim." India as a picturesque appendix to Great Britain we have long known, but India politically alive and on the way to self-government is a new planet that swims into our ken.

India—a Nation! This is surely the greatest political miracle of modern times. For what is India? She is not a country but a sub-continent, comprising within her wide borders three hundred and twenty million people, three times the population of the United States of America, speaking 147 languages and dialects and presenting as marked divergences of race, religion, custom and civilization as are to be found on the continent of Europe. Under the dominance of Caste she represents 2,378 separate blocks of humanity having no essential dealings with each other in the great human relationships of dining and marrying. What hope is there for democracy in a soil like this where the doctrine that "men are born free and equal" is negatived at every turn? This surely is the miracle, that patriotism has found a way of bridging gaps that seemed eternal and lighting up these separate human blocks with the glory of a common citizenship. The Motherland—the name her children love to give her—has asserted herself, and her sons and daughters respond; the day has

dawned when the meanest native of Hindustan may lift his head unashamed and say, "I am an Indian." India's rise to national self-consciousness is an impressive study, but it will be sufficient here to recall the outstanding landmarks.

We shall be safe to begin with 1836. It was then that the momentous decision was made to introduce the teaching of English into India and to open the gates to Western education. Lord Macaulay's minute in this connection ranks as one of the decisive documents of history. The seeds of democratic institutions were sown then, and the following passage from Macaulay reads like fulfilled prophecy now: "It may be that the public mind of India will expand under our system until it has outgrown that system; that by good government we can educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge they may in some future day demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I do not know. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it; whenever it does come, it will be the proudest day in English history." That day has come. There is, of course, the other side to the shield, and Mr. Gandhi—one of India's greatest and most perplexing sons—regards the introduction of English education as the beginning of his country's degradation.

Our next landmark is 1857–8. It marks the dark days of the Mutiny and the transfer of government to the British Crown. India had become too big a proposition to be run by a Company. The royal proclamation of November 1, 1858, is meet to rank with Magna Charta, and the following passage has provided sanction and inspiration for many an eloquent Indian oration: "It is further our will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity to discharge." The Indianization of the public services is an older slogan than Home Rule.

We pass on to the Russo-Japanese War, which vindicated the right and demonstrated the ability of the Orient to stand up to the Occident. When Japan conquered Russia she opened a door of hope for all Asiatic peoples, and the effect in India was

widespread and profound. Here, if anywhere, we light on the exciting cause of the National movement: the real cause lies in the natural evolution of a great people, fostered in the main by the generous spirit of British administration, fed by the constant inflow of western ideas, strengthened by the untiring efforts of patriots like Gokhale, Surendra Nath Bannerjee and others, and enriched by the sanctions of the Christian Gospel. It is a short cry from the Russo-Japanese War to the World War which determined decisively India's place in the sun. Her contribution in men, money and munitions will rank with that of any of the Allied Nations, and her chivalrous bearing during these years of conflict won for her the admiration of the world. The war did not create India's fitness for a larger measure of responsible government: it revealed it. "They are worthy for whom we should do this" might well serve as the preamble to the historic statement of British policy in regard to India made in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917: "The increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

We light on our last landmark in the Government of India Act of 1919, under which the British Parliament laid the foundations of a new Constitution for India. The inauguration of the new Legislatures by the Duke of Connaught at the beginning of the present year completed the structure and paved the way for the exercise of responsible government. Under her new Constitution India possesses a central government consisting of the Viceroy and his Executive Council, and a Legislature of two Chambers—the Council of State of 33 elected and 27 nominated members, and the Legislative Assembly of 103 elected and 41 nominated members. Differences of opinion between the two Chambers will be decided in joint sittings. The Legislative Assembly will be the House of Commons of India. She also possesses Provincial Legislatures. There are eight Governors' Provinces, each with a Governor and Executive Council, appointed by His Majesty, and a Legislative Council of elected and nominated members as follows:

Madras.....	Elected	98	Nominated	29
Bombay.....	“	86	“	25
Bengal.....	“	113	“	26
United Provinces.....	“	100	“	23
Punjab.....	“	71	“	22
Bihar and Orissa.....	“	76	“	27
Central Provinces.....	“	36	“	32
Assam.....	“	39	“	14

It will be observed that these Councils have a marked preponderance of elected members, and herein they mark an immense advance on the pre-reform Councils. The following smaller provinces will be administered by Chief Commissioners: North West Frontier Province, Delhi, British Baluchistan, Ajmere-Merwara and Coorg; and Burmah will formulate her own scheme of reform. An Indian Province resembles an American State, but is vaster. Bengal, for example, equals the British Isles in population, and Bihar and Orissa, whose first Governor, Lord Sinha, is an Indian, has as many people as France.

These Provincial Legislative Councils have made a brave beginning. The Bombay Council has already decided to extend the franchise to women! The myth of the “unchanging East” is surely in danger.

Before India's new political day could begin many stubborn barriers had to be surmounted. Chief among these was the existence of separate communities—Hindus proper, Moslems, Outcastes, Sikhs, Christians, etc.—all clamoring for recognition. To meet the exigencies of the situation the principle of communal representation was adopted and special constituencies based on communal rather than geographical grounds were created. Widespread illiteracy was another difficult hurdle. Roughly speaking, only 12 per cent of the people are literate, and the framing of an acceptable franchise was therefore a difficult proposition. After much discussion—the whole reform scheme was born of much discussion—it was finally conferred on males over 21 years of age, possessing certain residential and tax paying qualifications that have been generally approved. The standard is low enough to include the average farmer and the better class artisan. It lets loose an army of six million voters.

The Government of India Act does not confer complete self-government; but it makes it possible within the next quarter of a century. While the provinces have practical autonomy in matters of local import, within the Central Parliament the Executive is still to a large extent all powerful, and the division of administration into the two great departments of "Reserved" and "Transferred" subjects is an expedient dictated by caution and the exigencies of a lopsided situation. In matters relating to the defense of the country, maintenance of law and order, tariffs, land revenue and Imperial affairs, the Executive will still have the decisive say, although from now onward Indian public opinion speaking through its elected representatives will be able to express itself in no uncertain manner on these matters of high moment. Then, under "Transferred" subjects Indians will have effective control over education, industries, agriculture, sanitation, coöperative credit, local government bodies and public works. Briefly, the everyday work of government is now in Indian hands, Indian minds will largely frame the laws of the future, popular bodies will have a say in the control of the purse, and government will more and more conform to the will of the people.

It has to be remembered that the Reform Act does not apply to the territories under the rule of native princes; roughly, two-fifths of India. In these States for the most part feudalism still prevails and democracy is hardly in favor; but the omens indicate that these ancient aristocracies will in due course follow the lead of British India. Then will Lord Meston's vision splendid be nobly realized: "This great sub-continent of the future, comprising many daughter powers, varying in their political status as in their natural gifts, vying with each other in the growth of a new Eastern civilization, at one in their common allegiance to the British Crown—the United States of India." It is a kindling ideal.

These Indian reforms have been violently assailed from two opposing camps, those who hold they go too far, and those who hold they do not go far enough. But they have commended themselves to men of good-will in Britain as in India, and there is a general desire to give this great adventure in democracy a fair chance. Great Britain's record in India is open to the world, and

he who reads will find much to criticise, notably in the pages that relate to "Amritsar"; but the record stands. Let an Indian publicist sum it up. Speaking recently in Chicago Mr. Rustom Rustomjee, of Bombay, said: "To have found a continent as big as Europe without Russia, three times as populous as the United States, torn by constant internecine strife, without peace or settled government, and then to have transformed it within three generations into a well governed, peaceful, prosperous, democratic commonwealth of Indian nations, is an achievement without parallel in the history of mankind."

It would be rash, however, to imagine that the millennium had dawned in India, or that this great sub-continent had been made finally safe for the British Empire. There are at least two menacing movements on foot whose ultimate trend no one can foresee. First, there is the Khalifat or Mohammedan agitation, born of the blow to Moslem prestige inflicted by the World War, fanned into fierce flame by the seeming hardness of the terms of the peace treaty with Turkey, and embittered by the alleged broken promises of British statesmen. It is without doubt fed from Turkish and Bolshevik sources, whose hatred of Great Britain is implacable, and it derives immense prestige from its alliance with Indian Nationalism. Seventy million sullen and disillusioned Moslems within her gates are an embarrassing heritage to India as she emerges beyond the crossways; but let us take comfort in the fact that Mohammedan India played the game during the war.

The other movement is difficult to define; but its significance can hardly be over-estimated. Headed by one of the most amazing and masterful personalities in the world to-day—M. K. Gandhi—it makes a direct appeal to the heart of India and breathes the spirit of revolution. Called the "non-violent, non-coöperation movement" it has for its immediate object the securing of complete self-government before the end of 1921 by the application of a comprehensive policy of boycott; but it stands for something bigger than that: it aims at the setting up of an Eastern civilization, and issues a challenge to the dominion of the West. It is the uprising of the soul of India. It assumes that the West is material and the East spiritual; it protests

against railways, factories and hospitals as emblems of an alien civilization whose blighting influence must be stayed, and urges with vehemence a return to primitive simplicity as exemplified by forgotten sages and preached by modern prophets like Tolstoy and Ruskin; it voices the current discontents of the time and thereby casts a wide net; it stands for "soul force" as opposed to material might, and stoops to conquer by "passive resistance." Patriotism—for the time being the religion of educated India—plays an important part in the movement and the "Indianization of India" is an attractive slogan. Largely through the restraining influence of Mr. Gandhi the movement is not yet distinctly racial, but it is heading that way, and therein lies danger. On the other hand, this new Eastern civilization with its emphasis on the things of the spirit and its insistence on the Gospel of Self Help may prove a blessing to mankind. Meanwhile, it calls for vigilance and understanding.

The new India brings her old problems into the light of day; but the clearer air of a new time plays upon them and gives promise of healing. Caste under the discovery of brotherhood must relax, custom unbend, and religious animosities soften; social reform, now blessed with elbow room, will hasten the abolition of early marriage, of the seclusion of women and enforced widowhood; the goal of free and compulsory education must be steadily sought; the natural resources of the country must be developed, and India's industrial age, now opening, protected at the same time from the evils of Western industrialism—India may lead the way in the "humanizing of industrialism"; the spectre of famine and poverty must be laid by the wise spread of the co-operative credit movement, the introduction of better methods of farming, the cultivation of cottage industries and the extension of irrigation; mutual trust among her peoples must be established, and the reproach of her fifty million "untouchables" be removed.

The "United States of India" is no small proposition. Happily, though danger clouds threaten, the auguries are on the whole auspicious. The appointment of Lord Reading as Viceroy was one of Lloyd George's happiest inspirations. As a former Lord Chief Justice of England he carried East with him the maj-

esty of law, in India a strong and enduring sentiment. Was it not a lawyer of Bengal who, when questioned by an apprehensive tourist, "What would you do if the Russians invaded India?" made the historic and unanswerable reply, "Sir, I would appeal to the High Court"? Apart from religious animosities that may flame into bloodshed, and acute agrarian situations that may end in riot, India is essentially a law-abiding country, and this widespread regard for law and order, while it may not avert a stampede among the masses, will undoubtedly exercise a steadying influence. Lord Reading, be it further noted, is rallying to the side of the new Government the forces of moderate opinion, European as well as Indian, and thereby creating a breakwater of informed thinking against which the forces of extremism may break but not prevail.

Another singularly happy choice was the selection of A. F. Whyte, as President of the Indian Legislative Assembly. He is handling with understanding, tact and success the business of the Indian Parliament and helping to win for that body a distinguished place among the legislative assemblies of the world. We do well to remember also that while all Indians revere Gandhi the patriot saint, all Indians do not follow Gandhi the politician. In this old land, seething as it is with new life, the man of moderate views is not to be despised. He holds the key to the situation, and he is prepared to give the present system of government a fair chance.

Another important consideration from the standpoint of the British connection is the sentiment of kingship, deep-seated in the Indian mind. The Rajput, India's traditional fighting man, craves no higher glory than to die for his King on the field of battle; and the peasant, however suspicious he may be of Mr. Lloyd George, sleeps well in the great consciousness that he is a subject of King George.

Great Britain may still cast anchor in the good-will of the Indian peasant, and find her anchor hold. It is quite true that the apostles of non-coöperation are taking advantage of the present high pressure of living to sow the seeds of discontent, and the "credulous mass" is for the time being agitated and disturbed; but I think the mood will pass. The peasant is half

awake and doubtful about Home Rule. Under the British Raj he has enjoyed security of tenure and impartial justice; he has wit enough to recognize the value of railways, law courts, good roads, coöperative banks, hospitals, settled government and post offices,—he is the greatest user of post cards in the universe,—and his love for foreign cloth will survive many boycotts; his faith in the governing capacity and working honesty of his educated brethren is somewhat thin, and on the whole he is content with things as they are, provided prices fall and he is left undisturbed to till his fields.

Nor is it just to dismiss Mr. Gandhi as a dangerous and headstrong revolutionary who is impervious to reason and sees no path but his own. His sincerity and patriotism are unquestioned, and here surely we may strike common ground. He has more than once proved himself a man of affairs who knows when and how to compromise, and I hazard the view that he and Lord Reading will yet arrive at an understanding that will be honorable to both. India has need of all her sons in these tremendous days. There remains one last reflection in this connection: Great Britain can hold India only with the good-will of the people, and that good-will she has not yet forfeited. She never has and never could hold this great sub-continent by the sword alone. In round numbers, leaving out the Eurasians, who muster 100,000, there are not more than 200,000 Europeans (of whom 75,000 are British soldiers) in all India, a proportion of 1 to 1,600. Surely good-will, fair dealing, justice, service, and elbow-room plus humility will make India safe for the Empire against all comers.

Where does America come in? It is worth recalling that the myth of the wealth of India started Columbus on his momentous voyage of discovery that ended in America, and it is America's turn now to discover India. Apart however, from sentimental grounds, there are certain material reasons why the United States should keep track of these fast moving events in the Middle East. Indian public opinion strongly inclines to a revision of her fiscal policy, hitherto free trade, and we may take it for granted that a modified tariff will be instituted in the near future, in which event American imports which are valuable and considerable are likely to be adversely affected. Again, the burning

of foreign cloth in Bombay, under Mr. Gandhi's policy of boycott, leads to the reflection that the raw material from which these articles were manufactured probably came from America, where anything that bears adversely on the cotton industry is not to be treated lightly. The emergence of India has also a direct bearing on the thorny problem of Asiatic immigration. Happily the Indian himself is not much given to emigration, but he will demand a hearing when the question arises in the forum of world politics; for the educated Indian is determined to remove the reproach of inferiority from his brethren. Nor must the importance of India from the standpoint of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance be overlooked. With India disturbed, and in the mind of some hastening to revolution, it would be an act of folly for Great Britain to give up that Alliance unless something more comprehensive and enduring can be guaranteed in its place.

Finally, the United States of America has a still higher stake in the future well-being of this new democracy in the Middle East. During the last century and up to this present a noble succession of devoted men and women have left her shores to spend their lives in the service of India. Heralds of the Christian Gospel, bearers of the torch of education, healers of the sick and succourers of the needy, they belonged in the truest sense to the high order of nation-builders, and to-day their work appears. Mission stations, hospitals, orphanages, schools and colleges—against such there is no law and no Monroe Doctrine—have revealed the true America to India and built up for her a reputation that commercialism and moving pictures have impaired but not undermined. Behind the Indian Nation throbs the Indian Church, in the creation of which American missionaries and American churches have had a worthy share. Here we light on the supreme import of the United States of India—an Indian Church, an Eastern interpretation of Christianity, and the possible passing of the spiritual leadership of the World from the West to the East.

J. Z. HODGE.